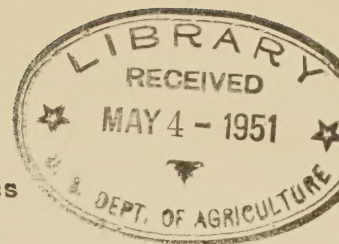


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
Extension Service, Division of Agricultural Economics  
Washington, D. C.



RURAL AREAS AND DEFENSE PROGRAMS 1/  
(Some current information for news letters, program planning, and other uses)

Population Facts and Changes Are Significant

I wonder how many times we have stopped to think about the changes that have taken place among the people in our States and counties during the last 10 years.

Since 1940:

- About 13 $\frac{1}{2}$  million commercial customers have died.
- Over 17 million marriages have taken place.
- Over 30 million babies have been born.
- Over one-third of all present families have been formed.
- Nearly 20 million more people live in the United States.
- Out of the 150-odd million people in the United States today, 63 percent would not remember the First World War.
- And 48 percent would not remember what conditions were like before the Second World War.
- About 15 to 20 percent more children will reach 4-H age during the 1950's than during 1940-49, in the country, rural towns, suburban areas, and small cities.

These data provide meat for serious thought in planning and carrying out extension programs during the next few years.

The tremendously high birth rate of the 1940-49 decade slackened during 1949 and 1950. It will probably turn back upward slightly again, under the impetus of mobilization. The high rate during the forties was largely the result of war-stimulated early marriages and of the large number of children born during the period 1915-24, who were reaching parenthood during the forties.

Census data are now rapidly coming off the press. Copies of various population reports generally may be found at libraries and sociology departments. Preliminary figures for counties and townships are available by States in Series PC-2, and final totals for States are available in Series PC-9. Figures on age distribution and on various farm, rural, and urban classifications will be out soon.

1/ Prepared by E. J. Niederfrank, rural sociologist, Division of Agricultural Economics, December 1950.



### Expanding Defense Affects Rural Life and Programs

Rural America today is in a far better position to carry on during the emergency than it was at the time of Pearl Harbor. Nearly 55 percent of all the farms in the United States have added electric power since 1940. Farm indebtedness is lower. Roads and highways are in better shape than ever. Hundreds of counties and communities have hospitals or health centers and recreation facilities that they did not have before. Thousands have community councils or planning committees where agencies and groups can better plan and work together. Teamwork is much more established. The idea of volunteer leadership is widely accepted and greatly developed. Patterns of family work and of neighborhood mutual aid in use of transportation, sharing of labor and equipment, and help in times of danger or trouble are still fresh in mind, and they can be reinstituted by any community that feels the need. The ideals of freedom, of the family farm, of stewardship of the soil, and of democratic methods are strong among rural people. The Extension services out in the counties are also better acquainted with other agencies, and they have gained much good experience since 1940 in giving special help to special wartime programs, such as selective service, farm labor, and machinery rationing.

But at the same time there is much hard work to do in the new emergency. The problems themselves have changed somewhat in character and extent. The methods of war are different; the civilian dangers are greater. Many new families now live in rural areas who did not have the experience of living there and aiding the emergency problems before. New volunteer leadership has to be continually recruited and developed. Extensive programs and agencies have also since developed. People will want the mistakes of the past avoided as much as possible this time. The higher the standards of living are the more difficult they are to adjust downward. Many rural areas have still not been able to complete adjustments to the rapid growth of the population and other changes since 1940; for example, in their school situation. Thus, despite the reserve of successful experiences and developments from the Second World War and other emergencies, the situations arising for the critical years ahead still present challenges that will again require our very best efforts.

Community organization takes on greater meaning with the all-out development of defense planning. Specialized county and community councils of one kind or another, such as health councils, recreation councils, church councils, and various agricultural councils or committees, have been growing rapidly in number during the last few years. And now with the spread of defense programs, there will undoubtedly be a tendency to form additional groups or units within State and counties, as well as in the Federal government.



Thus, the community organization picture is bound to become more and more complicated - for farmers and for agency workers. The Production and Marketing Administration and the USDA councils will have a good deal to do with the handling of various defense agricultural programs. Therefore, extension workers will want to make a special effort to keep informed about these, as well as about other programs and agencies. Teamwork will be more and more essential. Skills in human relations and group methods will be needed more as one is called upon to work more with organizations and agencies of various kinds. Greater use of volunteer leadership will again be made. Family and community approaches in extension methods will be all the more desirable. The more that agencies and groups can become acquainted and plan together the better it will be. Churches and other private bodies can frequently help a good deal and will want to do so.

Undoubtedly the expanding defense programs will also affect various aspects of community rural services and living -- recreation, health services, safety, family health, family life, and community life. For one thing, the tighter labor situation resulting from military manpower needs will result in more women and children again helping out with the farm work. Longer hours, fatigue, high prices, and transportation will more frequently enter in as factors affecting participation in community activities. Young people's programs will have to be altered to fit the absence of young men, called to military service. Interest will increase for self-made recreation in home and community. Recreation training which will provide people with recreation skills and values to help them adjust to changed conditions, and especially for young people needing to adjust to military service, should be stressed in Extension recreation projects and related programs.

Preventive health takes on new importance. Medical personnel again may be extremely short in rural communities. The danger of farm accidents will be greater due to many new workers and to rush work. And good health is a first essential to the most efficient use of labor. Therefore, it would appear that preventive family medical and nutrition practices and community health practices ought to be given very special emphasis, in order to reduce common illnesses, control epidemics, and adequately care for accidents. Coordination of nutrition, community organization, medical people, public health agencies, migratory labor camps, and other related programs with extension health work will be all the more significant.

People will also be more concerned with thinking about their families and cherished values. Family goals will be interrupted. They will be thinking about ideals. Various opinions about different programs and organizations and peoples, some opinions valid and some not, will become more common topics of conversation. It will be important to disseminate facts about programs, organizations, and peoples. People will also want agricultural programs interpreted to them in light of how they contribute to the defense effort and how they contribute to cherished values of family and society, as well as how they contribute to their pocketbooks. The family farm idea and democratic



methods in the community ought to be stressed, and programs designed so as to promote and protect these ideas. The more that programs relate to each other, both within and between agencies, the better it will be for morale and participation of the people. The people will appreciate anything we do that will help retard confusion and support their values.

Information and discussion for people, to help build morale and carry out special plans, probably are needed more today than at the time of Pearl Harbor. Adjustments come harder and it takes longer to develop all-out concern and common effort for defense mobilization in the absence of war attack. People are going to want reasons. They are going to want programs handled in the most effective ways. The problems themselves are somewhat different in character from the last time. One has to assume that this is going to be both a long task and a big task, requiring the best that we have in effort, in understanding, and in endurance.

It is also going to be a tremendously significant period. Great developments of national and world importance, affecting the lives of all people and perhaps all of history, will be taking place. Rural people will want to think about them. Community programs and rural leadership continue to be significant, because they are fundamentally important in our society and in the issues of the time.

The Extension Service, as an educational agency without any special ax to grind or public programs to support, is in a unique position to give real leadership for educational information, teamwork, methods, and joint participation with the people. We can give this leadership, or on the other hand, we might serve as a specialized program agency parallel with all others in desiring the attention of the people. The challenge for us is to keep functioning at the leadership level. That is what we have always done.

It would appear that brief reviews would be helpful now of experiences out in selected counties during the last war period in regard to the handling of programs, leadership, and other aspects, as a guide to still better developments this time; and perhaps followed with periodic studies during the present period in order to keep abreast of current situations and work out developments accordingly.

The record of the Extension Service during the Second World War and other emergencies has been excellent. Building on ~~these~~ experiences and new knowledge acquired from research, we can well meet these challenges that lie ahead. We have a greater opportunity than ever before for advancing sound organization methods and ideals for bringing about good farming, good family living, good communities, good extension work, good service of public programs, and strong democracy.